Emergency psychiatry

Suicide

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SUICIDE

• A willful self-inflicted life-threatening act which has resulted in DEATH.

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

(DELIBERATE SELF-HARM OR PARASUICIDE)

- An act of self-damage carried out with destructive intent.
- An attempt without the will to finish one's life.

Risk factors for completed suicide

SAD PERSONS

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•Sex (male)

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Age (elderly or adolescent)

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depression

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• Previous suicidal attempt

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Ethanol abuse

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• Rational thinking lost (psychosis)

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Social support lacking

• Organized plan for suicide

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• No spouse (divorced, widowed, single)

Sickness

A case of

• 22 y/old female patient brought by her family to the emergency after ingestion 10 tablets of paracetamol, ER physician called you to asses the patient.

Areas to be concentrated upon

- Obtain more information about the suicide.
- Evaluate the degree of suicidal intent and seriousness of the attempt.
- Investigate symptoms of depression/psychosis or other forms of mental illness.
- Assess current mental state including suicidal thoughts.
- Past history.
- Assess coping methods and ability to seek help.

OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SUICIDE

Questions related to the overdose:

- What type of tablets was taken?
- How many tablets were taken?
- How was the medication obtained?
- When was the overdose taken?
- Did she/he take anything else with the tablets?

Questions related to the period before the overdose:

- Where was the patient when taking the overdose?
- Why did she take the over dose?
- ✓ The event leading up to the suicidal act?
- ✓ What made her think of harming herself?

Questions related to after the overdose:

- What did she/he do after the overdose?
- How and by who she/he was discovered?
- How did she/he end up coming to the hospital?
- Does the patient regret the act?

*ASSESSMENT OF THE DEGREE OF SUICIDAL INTENT AND SERIOUSNESS OF THE ATTEMPT

The degree of suicidal intent:

Remember 4 Ps:

- > Planning/impulsivity.
- > Performance in isolation or in front of others.
- > Preparation made prior to the act.
- > Precautions to avoid discovery of others.

The seriousness of the attempt:

- The method was used.
- Did she/he understand the consequences of the method used?
- ➤ Was she/he aware of the action of the drug?
- ➤ Did she believe that the dose taken would be fatal?
- ➤ Did she take all the tablet or she leave behind a few?

Investigate symptoms of depression/psychosis or other forms of mental illness

Past history:

What do you want to look for in the past history?

- Past history of suicidal attempt
- Does she suffer from mental illness, depression, psychosis, anxiety disorder, borderline personality disorder?
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Family history of suicide, mental illness, alcohol or substance abuse .

Coping methods:

- Reaction to previous stressors
- What does she usually do when facing a problem.
- How supportive are family or friends .

Assess current mental state including suicidal thoughts

How?

- Assessment of the mood, hopelessness, worthlessness...etc
- Assessment of suicidal thoughts and plans:
- > Does she still have thoughts of harming herself?
- > What are those thoughts?
- > Does she have plans for it?
- > What prevent her from doing it?
- > If she has regrets for the current attempt.

Management

• This patient had planned the suicide, have depressive symptoms, still have ongoing suicidal intent.

• What will be your management? adopt a bio psychosocial approach

1st check:

- Evidence of mental illness.
- Ongoing suicidal intent.
- Any social stressors that can be addressed.
- Level of social support.

Short term plan

- Hospitalization in psychiatric ward after clearance from medical team and stabilization of patient condition.
- Close supervision by a nurse (1:1 observation).
- Start treatment for underlying cause.

Long term plan (after discharge)

- Close appointment (within one week).
- Medication enough till the next visit.
- Ensure observation by family and friends (support system).
- Easy access if patient have any suicidal ideation or need help.
- Refer for psychological therapy and social worker if needed.

